

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for distributing thermoplastic material supplied from a plurality of liquid inlets in a cross-machine direction of a meltspinning apparatus, comprising:
 - a [[first]] linear flow equalizer including a [[first]] plurality of flow passageways of substantially equal path length ~~that divide~~ that extend in the cross-machine direction and in a downstream direction, said plurality of flow passageways cooperating to divide a flow of a [[first]] thermoplastic material supplied from the plurality of liquid inlets into individual streams having a spaced relationship in the cross-machine direction; and
 - a forming member positioned in the downstream direction from said linear flow equalizer, said forming member having a surface oriented in the cross-machine direction and positioned relative to said plurality of flow passageways for merging the individual streams exiting from said plurality of flow passageways.
2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:
 - a spinneret positioned downstream from said forming member, said spinneret having a plurality of orifices ~~communicating with~~ coupled by said forming member in fluid communication with said first plurality of flow passageways for receiving the thermoplastic material and forming filaments therefrom.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said [[first]] plurality of flow passageways further comprises:

a first plurality of elongated slots each extending in the cross-machine direction and including opposed closed ends substantially equidistant from one of the plurality of liquid inlets; and

a first plurality of throughholes each substantially registered in alignment with one of said opposed closed ends of a corresponding one of said first plurality of elongated slots.

5. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein said [[first]] plurality of flow passageways further comprises:

a second plurality of elongated slots each extending in the cross-machine direction and including opposed closed ends substantially equidistant from one of the first plurality of throughholes; and

a second plurality of throughholes each substantially registered in alignment with one of said opposed closed ends of a corresponding one of said second plurality of elongated slots.

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 ~~further comprising:~~

~~a sheet forming plate downstream of said linear flow equalizer, said sheet forming plate having a~~ wherein said surface of said forming member is concavely curved surface ~~positioned for intercepting liquid exiting from said first plurality of flow passageways.~~

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said ~~[[first]]~~ plurality of flow passageways divide the flow of the ~~[[first]]~~ thermoplastic material supplied from the plurality of liquid inlets into individual streams having a spaced relationship in a machine direction orthogonal to the cross-machine direction.

8. (Currently Amended) A linear flow equalizer for distributing a thermoplastic material supplied to a spin pack of a meltspinning apparatus having a cross-machine direction, comprising:

an inlet plate having a plurality of ~~[[liquid]]~~ flow passageways for receiving the thermoplastic material, said plurality of flow passageways being spaced substantially equidistantly from each other in the cross-machine direction;

a first equalizer plate positioned in a downstream direction from said inlet plate and having a first plurality of elongated slots each centered about an outlet of a corresponding one of said plurality of ~~[[liquid]]~~ flow passageways, each of said first plurality of elongated slots capable of receiving a flow of the thermoplastic material from the corresponding one of said plurality of flow passageways, and each of said first plurality of elongate slots extending in the

cross-machine direction and including opposed closed ends substantially equidistant from one of said plurality of liquid passageways; [[and]]

a second equalizer plate positioned in the downstream direction from said first equalizer plate, said second equalizer plate having a first plurality of throughholes each substantially registered in alignment with one of said opposed closed ends of a corresponding one of said first plurality of elongated slots, each of said first plurality of throughholes capable of receiving the flow of the thermoplastic material from a corresponding one of said first plurality of slots, and said first and second equalizer plates cooperating to divide the thermoplastic material supplied from said plurality of flow passageways into individual streams having a spaced relationship in the cross-machine direction; and

a forming member positioned in the downstream direction from said second equalizer plate, said forming member having a first surface positioned in the cross-machine direction and positioned for merging the individual streams exiting from said first plurality of throughholes.

9. (Currently Amended) The linear flow equalizer of claim 8 further comprising:

a combining plate configured to combine ~~flowable~~ the merged individual streams of the thermoplastic material from said first plurality of throughholes forming member with another ~~flowable~~ thermoplastic material ~~to generate a multicomponent filament~~; and

a spinneret [[plate]] coupled in fluid communication with said combining plate, said spinneret receiving the combined thermoplastic materials and forming multicomponent filaments therefrom.

10. (Currently Amended) The linear flow equalizer of claim 8 wherein flow paths ~~[[from]]~~ through each of said plurality of ~~liquid flow~~ passageways to each of said first plurality of ~~throughholes~~ slots are substantially equal and substantially symmetrical in the cross-machine direction.

11. (Currently Amended) The linear flow equalizer of claim 8 further comprising:

a third equalizer plate positioned in the downstream direction from said second equalizer plate, said third equalizer plate having a second plurality of elongated slots each substantially centered in the cross-machine direction about one of said first plurality of throughholes, each of said second plurality of elongate slots having opposed closed ends substantially equidistant from one of said first plurality of throughholes; and

a fourth equalizer plate positioned in the downstream direction from said third equalizer plate, said ~~second~~ fourth equalizer plate having a plurality of second throughholes each substantially registered in alignment with one of said opposed ends of a corresponding one of said second plurality of elongated slots.

12. (Currently Amended) The linear flow equalizer of claim 8 ~~further comprising:~~

~~a sheet forming plate downstream of said second equalizer plate, said sheet forming plate having at least one~~ wherein said first surface is concavely curved surface ~~positioned for intercepting liquid exiting from said first plurality of throughholes.~~

13. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 8 wherein said first plurality of elongated slots are arranged in substantially parallel first and second rows in the cross-machine direction.

14. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 13 wherein said first plurality of throughholes are arranged in substantially parallel first and second rows in the cross-machine direction.

15. (Currently Amended) The linear flow equalizer of claim 14 ~~further comprising:~~

~~a sheet forming plate downstream of said second equalizer plate, said sheet forming plate having first and~~ wherein said first surface is concavely curved for intercepting the first thermoplastic material exiting from said first row of the first row of the first plurality of throughholes, and said forming member further comprises a second concavely-curved surfaces ~~each surface positioned for intercepting liquid~~ the first thermoplastic material ~~exiting from a corresponding one of said first and second [[rows]] row of said first plurality of throughholes.~~

16. (Currently Amended) The linear flow equalizer of claim 8 wherein said inlet plate includes a plurality of liquid-carrying channels coupling one of said plurality of liquid flow passageways in fluid communication with ~~a central liquid inlet passageway~~ said first plurality of elongated slots.

17. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 16 wherein each of said plurality of liquid-carrying channels includes a plurality of intersecting linear segments that extend symmetrically in the cross-machine direction.

18. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 17 wherein said plurality of linear segments extend symmetrically in a machine direction orthogonal to the cross-machine direction.

19. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 17 wherein said plurality of liquid-carrying channels branch such that said first plurality of throughholes are arranged in substantially parallel first and second rows aligned in the cross-machine direction.

20. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 16 wherein said inlet plate includes a downstream surface carrying said plurality of liquid-carrying channels, and a second plurality of throughholes upstream of said first equalizer plate, each of said second plurality of throughholes substantially registered in centered alignment with one of said first plurality of elongated slots.

21. (Currently Amended) The linear flow equalizer of claim [[7]] 8 further comprising:

a third equalizer plate downstream of said inlet plate, said third equalizer plate having a plurality of liquid-carrying channels with a plurality of intersecting linear segments that extend symmetrically in the cross-machine direction, said plurality of liquid-carrying channels coupling [[one of]] said plurality of liquid flow passageways of said inlet plate in fluid communication with [[a]] ~~said central liquid inlet passageway~~ said first plurality of elongated slots of said first equalizer plate.

22. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 21 wherein each of said plurality of liquid-carrying channels includes a plurality of intersecting linear segments that extend symmetrically in the cross-machine direction.

23. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 21 wherein said plurality of linear segments extend symmetrically in a machine direction orthogonal to the cross-machine direction.

24. (Original) The linear flow equalizer of claim 21 wherein said plurality of liquid-carrying channels branch such that said first plurality of throughholes are arranged in substantially parallel first and second rows aligned in the cross-machine direction.

25-31. (Cancelled)

32. (New) An apparatus for distributing first and second thermoplastic materials in a cross-machine direction of a meltspinning apparatus, comprising:

a first linear flow equalizer including a first plurality of flow passageways of substantially equal path length that extend in the cross-machine direction and in a downstream direction, said first plurality of flow passageways cooperating to divide a flow of the first thermoplastic material into individual streams having a spaced relationship in the cross-machine direction;

a first forming member positioned in the downstream direction from said first linear flow equalizer, said member having a surface oriented in the cross-machine direction and

positioned relative to said first plurality of flow passageways for merging the individual streams exiting from said first plurality of flow passageways;

a second linear flow equalizer including a second plurality of flow passageways of substantially equal path length that cooperate to divide a flow of the second thermoplastic material into individual streams having a spaced relationship in the cross-machine direction; and

a combining plate coupled by said first forming member in fluid communication with said first linear flow equalizer and coupled in fluid communication with said second linear flow equalizer, said combining plate capable of combining the first and second thermoplastic materials to form multi-component filaments.

33. (New) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said second plurality of flow passageways of said second linear flow equalizer extend in the cross-machine direction and in a downstream direction.

34. (New) The apparatus of claim 32 further comprising:

a second forming member positioned in the downstream direction from said second linear flow equalizer and coupling said second linear flow equalizer with said combining plate, said member having a surface oriented in the cross-machine direction and positioned relative to said second plurality of flow passageways for merging the individual streams exiting from said second plurality of flow passageways.